

bank of the Seine, near Bonnières, and — as
the crow flies
— about half-way between Paris and Eouen.
Here he was
joined at intervals by some of his Provencal
friends, Bailie,
Cdzanne, Marius Eoux, and Nurna Coste ;¹ and
they roamed
and boated, rested on the pleasant river islets
and formed
the grandest plans for the future, while Paris
became all
excitement about the war which had broken
out between
Prussia and Austria. The crash of Koenigsgratz
echoed but
faintly in that pleasant valley of the Seine,
among those
young men whose minds were intent on art
and literature.
But politically the year was an important one for
France, for,
from that time, the Franco-German War became
inevitable.

The Napoleonic *prestige* was departing. The
recall of the
expeditionary force from Mexico had become
imperative.

In vain did the unhappy Empress Charlotte
hasten to
Paris and beg and pray and weep; Napoleon
III, who had
placed her husband Maximilian in his
dangerous position,
would give Mrn no further help, and she, poor
woman, was
soon to lose her reason and sink into living
death.

The year which had opened so brightly for
Zola was to
end badly for him. also. After shocking the
readers of

⁺
" L'Eve'nement" as an art critic, he imagined
he might be

more successful with them as a story writer. So he proposed a serial to Yillemessant, who after examining a synopsis of the suggested narrative, accepted the offer. The story which Zola then wrote was called "Le Voau d'une Morte," but it met with no more success than the art criticisms, and after issuing the first part, Villeroessant

¹ M. Coste, who is well known as a *publiciste* in France, should have been mentioned earlier in this work. Though not so intimate with Zola as Bailie and Ce'zanne, he knew him in his school days. He largely helped Paul Alexis in the preparation of the latter¹ a biographical work on Zola.